

29 January 1979

Mr. Elie Abel  
Dean of the Faculty of Journalism  
Graduate School of Journalism  
Columbia University  
New York, N.Y. 10027

Dear Mr. Abel:

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), on whose behalf I write, is a U.S. Government component under the administration of the Central Intelligence Agency which publishes reports containing information collected and translated worldwide from foreign broadcasts and newspapers. You may be familiar with some of our eight volumes of material published daily, totaling some 200,000 words each weekday, and distributed to more than 5,000 consumers, both in government and the public. Many of our public subscribers are journalists, foreign governments, libraries, etc.

As you can imagine we have quite a problem editing and producing such a high volume daily publication. We are using approximately 35 editors, who review and compile materials received by teletype from field bureaus. The editing is done manually. But--like many commercial publishers--we are concerned about how we do our work in light of increasing cost and personnel limitations.

I am anxious to take a close look at several aspects of our editorial work to answer such questions as:

- + Are we employing the best copy-editing craft? (Specifically, are we over-editing?)
- + Can our editorial procedures be streamlined to involve fewer people without suffering loss of quality?
- + Can there be a meshing of our 24-hour Wire Service with our publication editing?
- + Are we giving the right kind of training to our editorial recruits?
- + Are we structured properly in terms of getting the greatest productivity while retaining some specialized background knowledge?

+ Are we properly supporting our editors with references aids, library facilities, etc.?

+ What is the best method for insuring quality control?

To address these questions we would be interested in securing the services of someone from academia or commercial journalism, on a short-term contract, who could take a look at our editorial process and suggest improvements. Would you be able to suggest a person who might be interested in such a contract? I would imagine we are talking along the lines of about four weeks.

I would be grateful for any suggestion you might make.

Sincerely,



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Chief, Operations Group

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